

DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP



A monthly magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers.

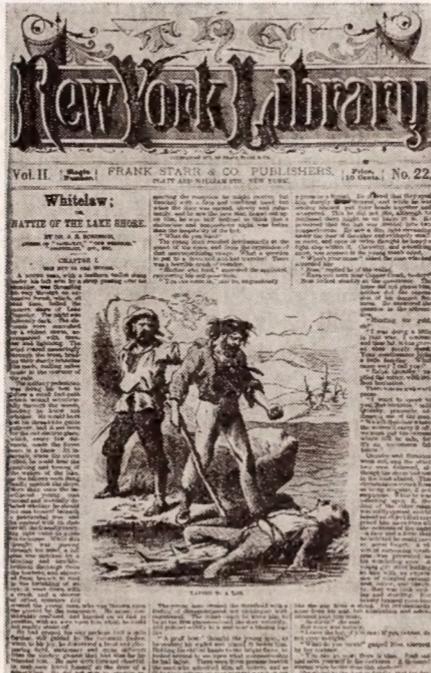
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Buffalo Bill's Benevolence

By Gerald J. McIntosh



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Buffalo Bill's Benevolence or, Col. Cody's Church Dollar

By Gerald J. McIntosh

Some forty-five years ago and more the First Christian Church in Little Rock, Arkansas, one of the larger churches of the city had as its pastor a prominent, well-known clergyman whose name was the Rev. Harry G. Knowles. A very forceful speaker he was always in the fore-front of anything that came up that was seemingly for the betterment of the city, the community and the State, and he was very active indeed in all civic affairs.

I knew him personally, saw the inside of his church on special occasions, and heard him preach more than once. It was at a meeting held outside his church, however, at another time and another place that I had the pleasure of meeting and getting acquainted with him and having a chat that lasted for some several minutes. I should say he was somewhere about in his middle prime as a minister the years he held the pastorate here.

Having led his church here to new and greater heights in membership, added church facilities, expanding programs, so on, and a decidedly vast and general all-around prominence, after several years Mr. Knowles was transferred to a larger church at Houston, Texas. I never saw him again, but I understand he also greatly advanced the church in that great city, too. I don't recall the year he passed on, but I was "on the road" in the course of doing my job, and ironically a Houston newspaper containing his obituary fell into my hands, so I knew of his passing at the time he died.

In his obituary there was a few words on his life. Previous to his death he had made it known that in his early life in the ministry he had been pastor of a church at North Platte, Nebraska, for a while, which was probably during the first decade of this century, and maybe in a year or two succeeding that time. And here is where Bill Cody enters to play his part in this true story.

North Platte was the residential home of Buffalo Bill during this period in his life, the winter home of the old scout and showman when he had to pull his Wild West Show off the road after the long summer season and the performers and live stock had to go into winter quarters for the equally long and severe winter and its lonesomeness and idle time, though of course some of the western gentry in the show might have followed other pursuits till show time opened up again.

Maybe I ought not digress or deviate from what I started out to tell, which was a tale of the old westerner and showman from a somewhat different angle than most of the material that has been written and told about him, but well-known facts can't be disputed and truth will out it is said. The famous ranch house built by Col. Cody near North Platte was known as "Scout's Rest." It was an imposing and striking structure and was said to have been rather lavishly furnished for that day and age. After Cody's death it was somewhat

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neglected and fell into some decay through neglect and disuse. I understand that during the past few years it has been restored to good condition and is quite an attraction to tourists and is visited each year by great numbers who happen to find themselves in the vicinity of the Nebraska town.

Much has been told heretofore as to Buffalo Bill's free-spending and his love of a good time and of how he couldn't turn down an old friend he happened to meet who happened to be "down on his luck" at the time. It has been told of how he liked to invite his old cronies to Scout's Rest, friends of the show on the road and old comrades of the range, where a good time was had by all, etc. I do not have the book now, but I once read a story in which the author described the "wild times" that took place at the ranch home. He declared that drinking bouts lasted for days at a time and were practically winter long, at times "flooring" the heaviest drinkers at the scene. Poker games for heavy stakes, and going on and on, apparently having no end. As to whether the author exaggerated in his description we don't know. But undoubtedly some of it was true from all reports.

Certainly, the breed of men in attendance at those gatherings in that day and period, were of the type who would most likely indulge in that kind of merriment. They weren't saints by any means, but of the hearty rough-and-tumble type and this was the form of their exuberance, as it was of the times and era. But be that as it was and judge not lest ye be judged. Maybe I shouldn't have brought all this up here but it seemed timely.

But I have strayed far from the field without really wanting or intending to do so. The Rev. Knowles does not state just when or how he met Col. Cody, but in the course of things the introduction was brought about. And he took notice of the fact that Bill was driving in from Scout's Rest and attending his sermons on Sunday mornings, and with a good degree of regularity at that. Cody must have been a striking personage in the congregation, with the unusual appearance that was his, his long grey locks, the goatee on his chin, the beard and mustache, possibly attired in clothing that was more or less of a western flair, perhaps.

But a symbolic thing of his took place when the collection plate was passed. From the first appearance on he always deposited in the plate a "new, bright, shiny" silver dollar. It was the same each Sunday that he was in attendance; always a dollar, no more, no less, and his contribution was always in the form of the shiny dollar, Rev. Knowles relates. This as long as Mr. Knowles held the pastorate in North Platte, or as long as Cody was an attendant at his sermons. How long this lasted we don't know. Buffalo Bill died in January, 1917, but prior to this time he had been in other parts of the West a great deal.

Throughout the years of my life from boyhood up—I'm nearing 73—it has been my pleasure to read many, many books written about Buffalo Bill, some supposedly true, but the vast amount of them avowedly fiction, many of them of the "dime novel" order. Also read many magazine and newspaper articles, some true, some no doubt false. At one time I had quite a collection on him but it is gone. Very few of the writers of the stories I have read on this noted Westerner and dime novel hero haven't bothered to dwell on what might have been the spiritual side or angle of the man. In fact, there has been so little that it might practically be said to be nil. Always it has been adventure, adventure, and not at all conducive to a path that led to spirituality. But a violent life 95 per cent of the time, which of course was made necessary in the winning and conquering of our great West, or life in the show arena and entertainment world, where a life lived and character in general has been looked

at with askance since time immemorial. I don't mean to cast any reflections on the lives of the persons who have followed the footlights, the theater, or the people who ride in the tented arena, for many good people have done this for a living, and persons with noble characters.

I didn't get to see the Wild West Show of Buffalo Bill when it was at its best, nor even after he merged it with Pawnee Bill's show. I always regretted this very much. However, after the Two-Bill show was broken up and in 1914 more than two years before Cody died I did get to see him when he was with the Sells-Floto Circus. And when he dashed around the ring on his famous white horse, well—that was my "The Thrill That Comes But Once In a Lifetime."

William F. Cody, in spite of any "bad" thing written on him, could have been only a God-fearing man. I do not like to look upon anything one might point out to me which he did that could be placed in the class of what we might call "misdeeds." It is of record that he belonged to one of our great fraternal organizations founded centuries ago the founding of which has for its basis the Bible and Christianity, a great organization that is very active in many parts of the world down to this day.

I don't know if Cody was a member of the church, though I suspect not; or if he had any "preferential leanings." A present day member of our own Round-Up some few years back wrote a book on Buffalo Bill which is the best I've ever read, a book which I consider the final on the old scout.

In this book the author tells us that Buffalo Bill was baptized into the Roman Catholic Church a few hours before his death. (I remember reading of the incident at the time, when I was a young man). This step forward spiritually was a very commendable one on the part of the old hero, even though a belated one. But it is never too late to do good and turn for the right. The book's author says Cody gave generously to the churches of Cody, Wyoming, the town named for him.

A statement by the author of this book says no doubt Cody was induced to take this spiritual step by the urging of his wife. I don't know what her religion was, but rather think she was of the Catholic faith herself. Cody and his wife had marital difficulties over a long period of time. I know a divorce suit was instituted, but one was never granted. Cody and his wife, "patched up" the matter more than once but the latter parts of their lives were entangled in the courts over and over.

Hundreds and hundreds of books, serials, periodicals, magazines and newspaper articles have been published on the life of this "giant" of the old West, with dozens and dozens of writers doing the job. And yet with so little having been said or devoted to the religious side of the man the fact remains in spite of all this the name of Buffalo Bill still remains and probably will remain an unchanged legend. He was the greatest of the old Wild West heroes to my way of thinking. In spite of all to the contrary as Stephen Decatur put it ". ! May it ever be in the right, but right or wrong, My Country!" And as it is said in the Bible: "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone!" And again and further: "Judge not, lest ye be judged also."

All hail to the memory of William Frederick Cody, "Buffalo Bill."

By this media it can ever be known that at his home in Nebraska for a part of his time at least, Sunday mornings were devoted to hearing the gospel along with his fellow man, and that for a long line of Sabbath days his benevolence was shown in the contribution of a bright new shiny silver dollar to the cause that means the most to all of us.

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There was a net increase of 10 members during 1972. 5 members died, Charles Westbrook, W. S. Houston, H. O. Jacobsen, A. E. Vogt and R. H. Porter. 21 members dropped due to lack of interest or other reasons, John H. Foster, H. J. Flannery, Frank Schott, D. McKinney, John M. Lohn, Matthew A. Hartigan, Annie L. Green, John L. Fell, John Bright, Mrs. A. P. Schneider, Univ. of Western Ontario, Pasadena Main Library, Paul Landfried, Charles A. Southerland, Vivian K. Wellwood, Clayton Subscription Agency, Charles Wagner, Richard L. Trindle, Benjamin O. Heady, Roger A. Filardo and Nostalgia Press. 36 new members were enrolled beginning with No. 316 above.

CORRECT ANSWERS TO MERRIWELL QUIZ

I'm afraid the quiz on Merriwelliana proved a flop. There were no entries. However for the benefit of those who toyed with the questions and gave up, the following are the answers. After reviewing the questions it is apparent that the quiz was too difficult for the average reader. We may try again in the future but of a more general nature.

1. What was Frank Merriwell's middle name? A. Harrison (Tip Top #3)
2. What was Frank Merriwell Jr.'s middle name? A. Hodge (TT #530)
3. What was Dick Merriwell's aunt's first name? A. Lucy (TT #274)
4. Name 7 Merriwells appearing in Tip Top. A. Frank, Frank Jr., Dick, Charles Conrad, Asher Dow, Carlos and Inza.
5. What was Burt L. Standish's real name? A. Gilbert Patten
6. What was Old Joe Crowfoot's Indian name? A. Shangowah
7. What names did Old Crowfoot give Frank and Dick Merriwell? A. Strong Heart and Injun Heart
8. Give two aliases of Dion Santenel. A. Hector King and Brandon Drood
9. What real-life pitcher provided the basis for Frank Merriwell's double-shoot? A. Billy Mains
10. Who was Harry Adair? A. Won prize for Prize Plot story No. 66
11. Which Tip Top character died, reappearing among the living, then died once again? A. Inza's father, Bernard Burrage. (Died in TT #268, reappeared in #376 and died again in #401)
12. What popular Tip Top character drawn from real life, was eventually reported dead, reappeared in Standish's Lefty Locke Series? A. Walter (Cap'n) Wiley
13. What stock characters comprised the "Mascot Band"? A. Ephraim Gallup, Barney Mulloy and Hans Dunnerwust.
14. How many Tip Tops were omitted from the 245 thick book reprints? A. 54, 36 of Tip Top Weekly and 18 of New Tip Top Weekly (the Owen Clancy stories)
15. How many chapters were devoted to a series of Tip Tops entitled, "Dick Merriwell at Fardale; or, The Wonder of the School"? A. 202
16. Name three major league baseball teams defeated by Merriwell-led teams. A. Chicago Colts, Philadelphia Athletics and Boston Red Sox.
17. Which Tip Top included another Tip Top in the cover illustration? A. No. 359
18. Name a Tip Top whose cover bore no relationship to the story within. A. No. 285
19. How many years did Bruce Browning attend Yale? A. 7 years
20. In what improbable Tip Top story did Dick Merriwell fatally shoot what improbable creature? A. No. 796. Dick Merriwell shot a pterodactyl. Fatally wounded, it fell over a cliff near Montauk Point

There were 2019 characters in the first 273 Tip Tops. This includes every Bill, the bartender, Mike, the tough, Sam, the bellhop, mention of Columbus, Caesar, Adam, Solomon, Mr. Hodge, etc. Every proper name that appeared. If you knock out the "mention only" category, that would eliminate 284 from the total number above.

Questions and answers prepared by Bob McDowell.

SAD NOTE

Gerald James McIntosh, aged 78, of 920 South Jefferson Street, a retired employee of the Rock Island Lines, died Thursday. He was a Methodist and a Mason and was a member of the Shrine Temple of Oklahoma and M. M. Eberts American Legion Post. Survivors are his wife, Mrs. Savannah Begley McIntosh; a son, Charles M. McIntosh of New York; and a brother, E. W. McIntosh of Overbrook, Okla. Funeral will be at 11 a.m. Saturday at Griffin-Leggett by Rev. John E. Livingston. Pallbearers will be Warren A. Head, Marcus Vandiver, Robert Tschiemer, Bobbie Tschiemer, Mike Tschiemer and J. A. Gray. Burial will be at Roselawn Memorial Park.

—Arkansas Gazette, Fri. Dec. 22, 1972

NEWS NOTES

Joseph Siepian, 7401 Ridge Blvd., Brooklyn, N. Y. 11209, has some 19 Rover Boys, Tom Swifts, Stratemeyers, Oliver Optics for sale. He'll be glad to answer any letters from the members.

Clarence M. Fink has an article on old time Valentines in the Feb.-March 1973 issue of Popular Handicraft and Hobbies published by Tower Press, Box 428, Seabrook, N. H. 03874.

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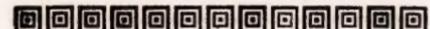
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- Vol. 26, Nos. 21-30—April 6-June 8, 1871
- Vol. 34, Nos. 33-43—June 30-Sept. 8, 1879
- Vol. 37, Nos. 9-22—Jan. 9-April 10, 1882
- Vol. 41, Nos. 8-16—Dec. 26, 1885-Feb. 20, 1886
- Vol. 42, Nos. 29-39—March 20-July 29, 1887

NEW YORK SUN:

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THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW—Oct., 1863

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